

Rhino numbers climbing

SOUTH AFRICA

Conserving Africa's rhinoceros species is still a priority in South Africa.



Going, going... saved: South Africa is home to a significant percentage of the continent's remaining rhinos.

Efforts to conserve the two African rhinoceros species in South Africa continue, even though they are no longer locally threatened by extinction. WWF-SA is part of this campaign, with several projects funded by WWF international working to monitor and protect these animals.

Poaching still poses a threat to the rhino, and the populations in various parks and reserves require 24-hour protection. WWF-SA has therefore helped purchase crucial security and tracking equipment for the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park in KwaZulu-Natal, which holds 18% of Africa's white rhinos and 17% of the black rhinos. Thirteen white rhinos have been poached here since 1992.

WWF-SA also funds two annual rhino-monitoring projects, one of which surveys the black rhino population of the Kruger National Park.

According to the project executive and Research Programme Manager of the park, Danie Pienaar, "The 250-strong population is growing at close to its maximum capability, as indicated by the high number of adult females calving and the short intervals between births. The equipment purchased with the funding secured by WWF was instrumental in the success of the monitoring project."

The other project is the annual census of privately owned rhinos. The latest census recorded 1 742 animals – an increase of some 300 rhinos (just over 20%) from the previous year's count. The actual total may be even higher, as several owners would not allow their animals to be counted.

At least 165 calves were born on private land in the last year, of which only 13 did not survive. A further 91 deaths were recorded, with 40 due to natural causes, and 31 rhinos were hunted.

Most owners do not consider poaching a major threat, nor see the need for specialised security personnel. Only two privately owned rhinos were poached in the last year.

A worrying statistic is that at least 18 rhinos died during or shortly after transportation, which could be attributed to the use of unsuitable transport vehicles. This problem will hopefully be solved now that the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service has bought a suitable rhino truck, which is already earning its keep. WWF-SA was able to help with the purchase of this truck with funding provided by the Ubuntu Welfare and Development Trust.

FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

More support for the College

Forbes Group Limited recently made a substantial contribution to the running expenses of the Southern African Wildlife College. This financial injection comes at a crucial time in this first year of the College being operational. Sponsorships for three short courses were also received from First National Bank, the Peace Parks Foundation and The Green Trust.

Strategic get-away in Noordhoek

April saw virtually the whole WWF-SA staff attend a three day strategic planning meeting at the Monkey Valley resort in Noordhoek, on the Cape Peninsula. The accommodation and use of the resort were presented as a donation in kind by proprietor Judy Sole, who is also a WWF-SA trustee. The beautiful and peaceful surroundings provided the perfect setting for this crucial planning exercise.

3M to the (projector) rescue

WWF-SA's overhead projector was recently stolen in King Williams Town while being used on a field trip. However, the loss was barely felt due to the lightning quick action of 3M. Within the blink of an eye, and before the crime scene was even cold, a brand new, state of the art machine had arrived free of charge on the WWF doorstep, much to the grateful relief of WWF staff members.

Paper for free

Sappi has donated the paper used for the printing of WWF-SA's prestige calendar for the past several years. This year they went a step further, also donating the paper used for WWF-SA's commemorative 30th Anniversary review.

Substantial donations were also received from the Ubuntu Welfare and Development Trust, Liberty Life and the Rembrandt Group Ltd.